The indefatigable desire to write about human relationship led me to carry out my research on 'Man-Woman Relationship'. Man-woman relationship plays a pivotal role through which all other gamut of human relationships emerges. I was thus determined to embark on this journey to trace the various aspects of man-woman relationships in relation to Indian novels in English.

The enormity of the subject was brought to my notice by my supervising authority. Hence we decided to work on the topic in fewer and unambiguous terms, as far as possible and framed the work to include "Man-Woman Relationship in Indian Novels in English", circumscribing the period of time from 1930 to 1980.

In the first chapter, efforts are made to define human relationships in general and the formation of man-woman relationship in particular. The intricacies involved in making a man-woman relationship strong and healthy along with the factors liable for vitiating it has also been included. While delving into the depths of human relationships, the help of social sciences was sought, without losing sight of the literary point of view. Sociology was of some help initially, but this was substantiated by using selective examples taken from various novels. In the first part a brief narration about the sociological background that influences the formation
of man-woman relationship is considered. In order to illustrate the points regarding the social evils prevalent in the society, the Indian novels in English provide a rich source of materials on the glaring distinction between a male and a female child. In a similar way, legislative laws were enforced in order to make the living conditions of women better.

For instance, it is very important to dig into the sociological background to understand the man-woman relationship better. Therefore the position of woman in the early society and the restrictions imposed on her subsequently has been reviewed here. Eventually the consequences of the forced limitations that made her to lead a life simulating a mere domestic animal have been elaborated. In the corresponding second part, examples from different novels have been picked up to illustrate the position of woman. In some novels men treat their women as friends, while in other novels they are treated as inferior, incompetent and impure creatures.

The third chapter portrays the participation of man and woman in the Independence Movement and the resultant partition of India as depicted by the Indian novelists through their work. During the time of struggle for freedom, a mere call from Gandhiji brought out the women from their homes. These women worked shoulder to shoulder with men and fought gallantly to achieve the Independence for our country. All this was possible because the leaders had themselves realised that by keeping
the women population indoors they could not carry on with the struggle for freedom successfully. Women who were confined to the four walls of the house thus became bolder and braver resulting in a healthy man-woman relationship during that period of time.

Equanimity was observed in the man-woman relationship among the middle class people. In rural areas, man-woman relationships have always been healthy. This is because women have to go to their fields as well as to the nearby markets, to sell their produce. The participation of women in the Independence Movement is worthy of note. History is replete with brave women like Rani of Jhansi, Laxmibai, Kittur Rani Chennamma, Vanek Obavva, and others. In the similar way, novels written with freedom struggle as the theme are full of such women characters. These characters are full of spirit and enthusiasm, working and paving path for the freedom of the country along with men, thereby proving their own worth amongst them.

India gained Independence in August 1947, but immediately after that, partition occurred as the worst ever tragedy for the country. Indian novels in English portray the dismal picture of the man-woman relationship which was adversely affected during that period. The newly created geographical border separated people in love and shattered their dreams. Their immense sufferings touched the human heart. Thus truth is
stranger than fiction, and the untold miseries brought about by partition are unbelievable, yet true.

In the fourth chapter, the emergence of feminine ethos and its affect on both marriage and family, the influence of Western feminism on the Indian women and the resultant changes are discussed. Some special traits or characteristics distinguish men from women. General awareness of this distinction among women may be called as the ‘feminine ethos’. It means that she is distinct and free from the dependency syndrome. The consideration that she is important to the society stems from the fact of her inborn qualities like kindness, willing sufferance for the sake of her dependents and her capacity to procure and protect life. Men may visualise these as her weaknesses but rather these are her strengths.

After India gained independence, many women were able to receive education and subsequently acquired employment. Thus the society treated them at par with men. Emergence of feminine ethos in Indian society was thus another important milestone towards women’s emancipation. Indian society got galvanised due to the influence of western education and it had positive impact on the social condition of the Indian woman. She became aware of her rights and duties. Gainful employment also helped her to play a meaningful role in the domestic affairs. The influence of western literature brought Indian women face to
face with the feminine movements of the West and they were substantially benefitted by them.

If mutual trust, understanding and equitable treatment cements the man-woman relationship, there are other elements also which contribute to the degeneration of such relationship. Among them the cultural polarisation, the political conflicts and the East-West encounter are the prominent ones. In the fifth chapter of the thesis this aspect of man-woman relationship has been highlighted. To cite a few examples, Rama and Madeleine in Raja Rao’s novel “The Serpent and the Rope” are separated by cultural disparity whereas Mira and Richard in Kamala Markandaya’s “Some Inner Fury”, are pulled apart by political turmoil. Similarly Esmond and Gulab in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s novel, “Esmond in India” are separated from each other due to the East-West encounter. Such troubles may ensue when a radical society emerges holding human relationship more important than these man-made barriers.

Economic independence, incompatibility and a desire for greener pastures have also led to the problem of the emergence of a ‘love triangle’ in the lives of man and woman. The entry of a third person that is the ‘other man’ or the ‘other woman’ has always created instability in human relationships and has spoilt the social fabric in India. Society attaches stigma to such waywardness, and despises people associated
with it. In spite of the illegitimate nature of the relationship it has often inspired the lives of men and women.

Man-woman relationships are either maintained or vitiated depending upon the role played by each partner. When both the partners play a complementary role by adopting the moderate philosophy of life, ‘Let’s live and live better’, the relationship is harmoniously sustained. When either of the partners becomes victim of petty emotions such as jealousy, vengeance and inferiority complex, it results in incompatibility. This leads to contradictory role-playing and at times acquires such monstrous proportion that the other partner becomes insane and resorts to various forms of protests such as homicide, self-immolation, etc.

On the whole this topic has been both challenging and taxing. Every effort has been made to trace the status of woman in the society. The reasons for fall of the position of woman and the impact it created on man-woman relationship and the factors essential for maintaining the relationship and the reasons responsible for vitiating it. In this way if a society considers human values as its parameter, the society becomes strong and healthy. A healthy society gives impetus to healthy human relations or vice versa. Healthy human relations are a pre-requisite to better literature.